

My public comment on record for:

Topic: 3:12-cv-02265-SI United States of America v. City of Portland

Time: Aug 24, 2021 09:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Greetings your Honor, colleagues and all those attending,

My name is Seemab Hussaini and I am a community organizer with a focus on Muslim/immigrant/refugee communities, and those in the carceral system. I'm a co-founder of the state of Oregon's only Muslim civil rights org, a social justice and civil rights activist and an appointee in the 20 member commission to rebuild the new Portland Independent Police Review Board.

<https://www.rethinkportland.com/police-oversight>

Grateful for being allowed for public comment, I'm here today in hopes to join my communities and advocates in these evidentiary hearings and inform you that from the perspective of the communities directly impacted by the actions of the law enforcement called the Portland Police Bureau, that they have maintained the status quo and have mastered political doublespeak through their lawyers, the Portland Police Association and their union arbiters.

While grieving the loss of George Floyd and many others lost to brutality of law enforcement, last year peaceful protesters were treated like caged animals by literally setting up fencing, stacking the most heavily equipped riot police on the other side, and on a Long Range Acoustic Device also known by the acronym LRAD demanding us to not touch the fence. This set the stage for an escalation. It cannot be seen otherwise. They showed up as hammers, and we all looked like nails

I cannot profess to fully understand the dichotomous relationship police have with protesters demanding accountability, vs. the far-right and white supremacist elements that espouse nothing but hate and intolerance for a faith they have no understanding of. Taking into account the example of police action and reaction to protesters demanding justice, vs police action against a group of the same elements that attacked our democracy on January 6th in Washington DC, PPB offered protection by allowing safe passages and guarding paths and routes for the Proud Boys and other hate oriented extremist groups over the years. Other times PPB did not engage until they were gone and what was left was an exasperated public.

Two days ago these same elements returned as it has become a tradition for them to do so annually. And as it is intended to happen when these elements arrive, a man filled with hate was emboldened. He followed two young Black children to the corner I was standing at with colleagues and continued to antagonize them with racist heckling, and goaded them to see pictures of lynchings on his phone. This is also the same man that pointed his gun at us and

eventually vollied gunfire as we didn't want to lose sight of this obvious danger to the communities. Yes, he was arrested, but none of this should have happened if there was not a reticence for law enforcement and city management to do as it is intended, which is to protect communities from these elements seen coming a mile away, rather than show up after the fact. He was eventually released w/o bail the same evening, without hate crime charges. This scenario had sent me right back to the advocacy work my communities and I engaged in after the murders committed by Jeremy Christian in May of 2017, as he also was emboldened by attending far right gatherings of Patriot Prayer, Proud Boys and other hate groups. Having telegraphed their intentions to this last weekend, 4 years later nothing has changed.

Many of my colleagues and I have raised concern that the PPB has been too brutal. In recent weeks they have swung the pendulum the other way to not police at all. Ultimately, this shows that the PPB is not providing public service. As though creating an alternate reality, the PPB Chief Chuck Lovell a day later (yesterday) said "...our critical staffing shortage and legal restrictions impacts our response." This statement's incredulity of the obvious is astounding. There were no staffing shortages, no excuses. All 800 officers were reportedly on duty.

In preparation for this day, the City's mayor and Police Chief thought the winning strategic plan would be to not do anything and allow these far right elements to come and go. This planning of lack of planning by our City officials and LE's over the last few years have created a mood amongst those that have protested for justice and accountability into assuming the responsibility that we Portlanders are the only resistance to these violent far right elements that have already taken lives in this city over it's recent and historic past.

On top of this, this Police bureau has had a magnanimous influence over the direction of policing nationwide, as it has influenced how police unions shield LE from accountability through leveraging of union contracts and arbitration processes.

This City has been in "partial compliance," disbanded COAB, has tried to strip independent community assessment from the settlement agreement, and has stifled Portland Street Response's need to attain its fullest potential, while uttering its name as a gesture of incremental progress. Through it all, Portlanders in crisis continue to die at the hands of PPB.

George Takei, hero of many nerds, stargazers and LGBTQIA activists just tweeted : "Portland Police: When you show up in force for BLM protests but decline to show up for Proud Boys riots, you are not being neutral. You are taking sides. We see you."

<https://twitter.com/georgetakei/status/1430043149762801713?s=21>

For that, I only have 2 words: Oh My.

It's difficult to conceive that this same police bureau can change. Your Honor, I'm completely unsure of how to address models of compliance being addressed here in this evidentiary hearing in light of all that I've shared. I'm grateful for Juan Chavez and the Oregon Justice

Resource Center; The Dr. T Allen Bethel's memory, Reverend Dr. Haynes, Pastor Knutsen of the Albina Ministerial Alliance; Jason Renaud and the Mental Health Alliance; Dan Handelman and the Portland Cop Watch; and the many community centered organizations and legal eagles, organizers and activists here.

Mostly, I'm grateful to Judge Simon for the clear and just process patiently overseen over all these years.

With brittle hope, thank you.